

II. Remarks

Claims 1-4, 7-8 and 10-20 were pending in this application. The present amendment cancels claims 1-6, 8-12, 14 and 19-20, adds new claims 21-32 and amends claims 7, 13 and 15-17 to more particularly point out and clarify Applicant's invention. No new matter has been added by the present amendment. After this amendment, claims 7, 13, 15-18 and 21-32 will be pending. Reconsideration of the application in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 4, 7-8 and 15-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 2002200929 issued to Tanase ("Tanase"). Applicant has canceled claims 1, 4 and 8 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claims 1, 4 and 8 are now moot. Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of claims 7 and 15-17 are traversed.

Claim 7 has been amended to recite that the reinforcement is in the form of stitching provided in the flexible material forming the gas supply duct. The reinforcement includes a length of thread which is disposed in the aperture and extends across the aperture to tie together opposing parts of the aperture. The length of thread restrains the opposing parts of the aperture from moving away from each other during inflation of the airbag. Support for this amendment may be found in Applicant's specification at paragraph [0054].

Tanase recites an air-bag 11 having inflating parts 17, 19 and 21 arranged in a plurality along the gas passage 23. A flexible inner tube 30 capable of guiding inflating gas G is arranged in the gas passage 23. The inner tube 30 has supply ports 30, 31 capable of supplying gas to the inflating parts 17, 19 and 21. At least one of the supply ports 30, 31 has a periphery 32 which is reinforced 33 with sewing-up thread, a stitched elongated reinforcement or a stitched annular reinforcement. *Tanase* at Abstract and figures 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 15. More specifically, Tanase discloses that the sewing-up thread is stitched around the supply port 30, 31, which has a form of a circular opening, so as to reinforce the periphery 32. *Id.* at figure 12.

Notably, the supply port 30, 31 is completely void of any element being disposed therein.

This is unlike Applicant's invention as recited in claim 7 where the reinforcing length of thread is disposed in the aperture and extends across to opposing parts of the aperture to restrain the opposing parts of the aperture from moving away from each other during inflation of the airbag. In that Tanase lacks the noted element of claim 7, the rejection based thereon should be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicant believes claim 7 is in a condition for allowance.

Claims 15-17 have been amended to depend upon independent claim 13, which has not been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Tanase. Accordingly, the rejection based thereon should be withdrawn.

Rejections under U.S.C. 35 § 103

Claims 2, 3, 10 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanase. Applicant has canceled claims 2, 3 and 10 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claims 2, 3 and 10 are now moot. Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of claim 18 is traversed.

Claim 18 depends from claim 17 which has been amended to depend upon independent claim 13, which has not been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanase. Accordingly, the rejection based thereon should be withdrawn.

Claims 2, 10-12, 13-14 and 17-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanase in view of U.S. Patent Application No. 2001/0019201 issued to Masuda ("Masuda"). Applicant has canceled claims, 2, 10-12 and 14 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claims 2, 10-12 and 14 are now moot. Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of claim 13 and 17-18 are traversed.

Claim 13 has been amended to recite that the aperture is in the form of a slit through the overlapping portions of the flexible material and the adhesive. The slit defines an outlet flap which opens from a substantially

closed condition during inflation of the airbag. Support for this amendment may be found in paragraphs [0049] through [0053].

In one embodiment, Masuda recites an air-bag having a cylindrical member 60 with a gas exit opening 62 reinforced by using overlapping double thick layers 63(a) and 63(b) which extend around the cylindrical member and are attached to each other by an adhesive 66 placed near the opening 62 which increases the strength near the opening. The double thick layers 63(a) and (b) are sewn together at an upper portion of the cylindrical member 60. (Masuda column 5, lines 46-67 and figures 10a and 10b). Notably, the opening 62 is of a circular form. Masuda at figures 1, 5, 6, 7a, 7b, 8a, 9, 10a, 11a and 11b.

Both Masuda and Tanase fail to disclose, respectively, an opening 62 and/or a port 30,31 in the form of a slit that defines an outlet flap which opens from a substantially closed condition during inflation of the airbag. In that both Masuda and Tanase lack the noted element of claim 13, the rejection based thereon should be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicant believes claim 13 and its dependent claims 15-18 are in a condition for allowance.

Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanase in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,073,961 issued to Bailey ("Bailey"). Applicant has canceled claim 3 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claim 3 is now moot.

Claims 19-20 were rejected under U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanase in view of Bailey and further in view of U.S. Patent Application No. 2001/0045729 issued to Muller ("Muller") and U.S. Patent No. 6,846,010 issued to Enders ("Enders"). Applicant has canceled claims 19-20 by this response and therefore, the rejection of claims 19-20 are now moot.

Claims 21-32 have been added by the present amendment and are dependent claims of amended independent claims 7 or 13. All of these elements are supported in the specification and no new matter has been added. Moreover, Applicant believes these claims are patentable for the reasons discussed in the foregoing paragraphs as well as for their own specific elements recited therein.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present form of the claims are patentably distinguishable over the art of record and that this application is now in condition for allowance. Such action is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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